

Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein 5778 Parashat Emor / פרשת אמור

The Poor and Yerushalayim

Our parsha is most commonly associated with a large section dedicated to surveying the holiday. Beginning with Pesach, the Torah describes each holiday according to the calendar sequence and relates the relevant laws for that day. The only exception to this barrage of holiday laws is a detour the Torah takes to describe one agricultural law:¹ When you reap the harvest of your Land, you shall not completely remove the corner of your field during your harvesting, and you shall not gather up the gleanings of your harvest. [Rather,] you shall leave these for the poor person and for the stranger. I am the Lord, your God. Why underlies the placement of this verse?

Rashi, citing a midrash, responds as follows:

To teach you that whoever gives לְקַט, gleanings, שְׂכָהָה, forgotten sheaves, and פְּאֵה, the corners, to the poor in the appropriate manner, is deemed as if he had built the Holy Temple and offered up his sacrifices within it

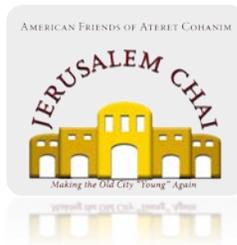
The Torah's juxtaposition teaches that giving the poor their due is the spiritual equal to offering the holiday sacrifices. This teaches us the great value that Hashem ascribes to tending to the needs of the destitute and downtrodden.

This connection between a properly functioning Yerushalayim and caring for the needy also emerges regarding the future redemption. The prophet Yeshayahu states "Zion will be redeemed with justice and its captives with charity."² According to one interpretation of this verse, the prophet is teaching that Yerushalayim will be rebuilt through the merit of justice and charity. Thus, caring for the poor will directly lead to the rebuilding of Yerushalayim and the bringing of the sacrifices.

In addition, another source similarly expresses this deep connection between Yerushalayim and charity. When recounting the blessings that the Jewish people will experience if they follow

¹ Vayikra 23:22. Translation is from chabad.org.

² Yeshayahu 1:27.



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God's commands, the Torah says: "Blessed will you be in the city, and blessed will you be in the field."³ The midrash comments as follows:

"Blessed will you be in the field:" in the merit of the *mitzvah* that you perform in the field, such as [leaving for the poor] the gleanings, forgotten sheaves and corners.

"Blessed will you be in the city:" This refers to Yerushalayim.

Once again, this midrash directly associates the observance of these agricultural laws and the blessing of Yerushalayim.

Perhaps the underlying conceptual connection is the theme of unity. Yerushalayim represents the oneness of the Jewish people; it is the city that connects all Jews together. The only way we can merit to rebuild such a city is by demonstrating to Hashem and to ourselves that we possess this trait of unity through caring for the most downtrodden in society.

³ Devarim 28:3.